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Procedia Environmental Sciences 20 (2014) 516 – 525

Procedia

Environmental Sciences

The 4th International Conference on Sustainable Future for Human Security, SustaiN 2013

“Theologization” of Psychology and “Psychologization” of Religion: How Do Psychology and Religion Supposedly Contribute to Prevent and Overcome Social Conflicts?

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Abstract

This study assumes that indigenous epistemological comprehension of social conflict and violence is at the heart of social protection. The authors aim to explain that there are two symptoms developing in Indonesia, i.e. “Psychologization” of religion and “theologization” of psychology. We conducted this research to map the symptoms by inviting resource person from religionist and psychological scientist circle. We asked five religious figures, where one of them is a Christian and the others are Moslems, regarding how theology should address psychology and vice versa, as well as its relation to the democratization of violence. We also inquire two psychologists regarding how psychology should address religion in the context of understanding and social intervention against social conflict and violence, and conversely, how theology should place psychology in this context. We concluded that if we managed to put psychology and theology in their place respectively, then the research projects and intervention can be more precise and just in formulating existing issues, as well as more optimistic expectations of the research results applicability in the field in order to build and maintain peace in Indonesia. Thereby, we can expect the nation’s socio-economic competitiveness to be maintained and even accelerated.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the SustaiN conference committee and supported by Kyoto University; (RISH), (OPIR), (GCOE-ARS) and (GSS) as co-hosts

Keywords: “Psychologization”; “theologization”; conflict; violence; Indonesia

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1. Introduction

One of the key issues affecting the stagnation even the deceleration of Indonesian competitiveness, including economic competitiveness, is social conflict and violence. All of the development efforts seem to be in vain if it is not accompanied by supportive social situation and condition. Therefore, peace building and peace keeping as a continuing effort to bring incompatible situation for social conflict and violence need to be persistently intensified. Social protection in the context of peace building and peace keeping is particularly crucial to be based on theories that are reflected continuously. There have been many empirical studies and systematic reviews attempting to explain the emergence and development of social conflict and violence. Various studies have confirmed that psychology and religion has a distinct contribution to our understanding of the factors causing social conflict in Indonesia and the recommended intervention. The problem is that the rapid development of studies regarding conflict, conflict resolution, and peace are not in line with the applicability rate of the study results in the field. Oftentimes, pessimism grew due to increased unresolved social conflicts and violence conducted by a number of groups which appeared more progressive compared to the number of conflicts and violence resolved owing to existing study results. The occurrence of shootings in Poso—Central Sulawesi as well as the Sunni–Shiite conflict in Sampang-Madura, Indonesia, has not shown signs of resolution to this day; in addition, intertribal conflicts in Papua are some indicators of the increasing unresolved social conflicts and violence.

Social conflict in this era is increasingly intractable^{1,2,3}. The term “intractable conflicts” is often synonymous with “protracted conflicts”. Intractable social conflicts⁴ are conflicts that (1) are persistent, stimulating further destruction, and rejecting resolution, (2) involving groups, such as families, organizations, and communities, as well as (2) from the period aspect lasted for more than 10 years and up to centuries. Gray, Coleman, and Putnam⁴ formulate the characteristics of intractable conflicts in more detail as follows:

“The fundamental features of intractability can be described in general terms. In essence, when perceptions of incompatibility (conflicts) are interpreted as sufficiently negative, intentional, and unjustified, they can lead to reactions and responses that produce patterns of increasing levels of intensity (escalation).” (p. 1416)

Various explanations at the micro-, meso-, and macro-level concerning social conflicts have been presented in the literature. However, there are not many articles that provide a comprehensive map regarding social conflicts in Indonesia by contrasting dominant scientific perspectives namely psychology and theology. The contrasting presented in this article is not meant to be an oversimplification. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe⁵ once stated, “Everything is simpler than you think and at the same time more complex than you can imagine”. This statement inspired the authors to perform progressive approximate iteration in order to explain the issues of social conflicts and violence. However, this effort requires a starting point that is quite clear before reaching the complex network of explanation regarding “system of conflict and violence”. This study is also an effort to explain what “uniquely Indonesia” is, in this case, it means originating from the knowledge of researchers, observers, and religious leaders in Indonesia (indigenous). So far, a consensus has been reached among scientists and religious leaders that humanitarian social conflicts are multidimensional, multifaceted, and cannot be properly explained by using single variable. However, there are not many articles providing juxtaposition regarding theological and psychological explanation concerning social conflicts. This research aimed to fill these theoretical gaps.

“Psychology” is “the study of the mind and behavior”⁶; while “theology” is “the science of God or of religion”⁷. John Lennon’s expression, in the song *Imagine*⁸ that is “*Imagine there’s no heaven / It’s easy if you try / No hell below us ... / Nothing to kill or die for / And no religion too / Imagine all the people / Living life in peace ...*”, shows that religion—paradoxically—can become a source of conflicts or lack of peace. “Psychologization” of religion and “theologization” of psychology are two topics which are the focus of this article. In “Psychologization” of religion, psychology is placed as the superordinate while religion as the subordinate. All issues, including social conflict, is seen through the lens of psychology as if all matters have to be explained using psycho-social terminology, including religious phenomenon which has the possibility of becoming the root of conflict and violence. In “theologization” of psychology, it is shown that there are a number of issues in the field regarding conflict and violence which is actually thick of psycho-social issues, but there are efforts to turn it into a religious one, with the argument that religion is the most living entity in Indonesia. The authors will first elaborate why “psychologization” of theology and “theologization” of psychology are featured in this article. Furthermore, researchers presented the results of the study regarding tension between both approaches of explanation.

2. “Psychologization” vs. “Theologization”

The term “Psychologization” has been popularized lately by de Vos^{9,10}. This term refers to the phenomena of the inclusion of vocabulary with psychological nuances (such as “psychotainment”, “psychological torture”, and other “psycho-...”) as well as psychological explanation schemes into the theoretical and practical field which is traditionally or conventionally not a field of psychology. He states that “psychologization” in the modern era is seeping into many aspects of life, be it politics, economics, or even social and culture. De Vos⁹ (p.313) once said: “It is clear that the hegemonic idea in the human sciences is ... once and for all, to confirm the human sciences as the sciences of behavior.” Raphael, as cited by Ziemann¹¹, calls it as “scientification of the social”, namely “the process in which human science concepts have shaped new terms and categories for the description of social contexts and offered forms of practical intervention in social problems” (p.80). Ryff et al., as cited by Jankowski¹², explains, “Microfication or over-”psychologization” refers to the assumption that ‘what is in the head (i.e.: cognitive orientations, coping strategies, intellectual abilities), heart (i.e.: emotions, moods, feelings), or actions (i.e.: behaviors, choices) of individuals’ has sufficient explanatory and causal power” (p. 143).

Ziemann¹¹ added that “psychologization” also occurs in religious topics. In history, there had occurred rejection by the religious and theological community (in this case the Catholic Church) until the 1960’s, especially towards “Psychologization” coming from Freud psychoanalysis which emphasizes determinism (or human unfreedomness), pansexualism, and relativism of religious life. In spite of this, broader acceptance of psychology gradually occurred, specifically the concepts concerning group dynamics (which started in the latter part of 1960’s) and pastoral care/counseling which broke down hierarchism in the Church and community in general. “Psychologization” of religion that was most remembered by the psychology community was conducted by William James through his book “Varieties of Religious Experience”¹³. According to Cho¹⁴, what was conducted by William James was establishing scientific status (factual truth) from “unscientific phenomena” (in this case: religious experiences), in which case the subconscious of a person actually plays a vital role. Cho concludes, “James’ psychological perspective of religious experience allowed him to develop a ‘piece-meal’ supernaturalism, in which the ideal and the real were intertwined” (p. 18). Interestingly, for Don Browning, as cited by Hardy¹⁵, with this “psychologization” of religion, psychology has become “a sort of religion” or “implicit theology” because psychology is teleological, typically contains an implicit notion regarding human essence and “what is good”; thus has a religio-ethical dimension. It is evident in clinical and developmental psychology which contain implicit visions concerning what things that can or should be “achieved” by a person.

According to Eghigian¹⁶, “psychologization” historically does not take place in a linear or progressive fashion, rather this process becomes noticeable “in a punctuated fashion, only after years of dormancy” (p. 201), specifically when psychology experiences changes in form and substance over the course of the 20th century. “psychologization” is the interpretation of the different matters in different contexts. The interpretation includes the birth of a paradigm, ways of questioning, as well as how to respond to issues using available intellectual resources. As an example, starting in the middle of the 1950’s, depth psychology, personality psychology, and essentialist psychology gradually faded and subsequently social psychology develops emphasizing social activism, environmental approach, and interpersonal relations. This is in response to the social-political atmosphere that developed in the world during the time, namely symptoms of sexual emancipation, juvenile delinquency, war and imprisonment; so it may be that the hypotheses of “political colonization of professional psychology” during this phase requires a re-examination because what actually happened is an encounter between psychology and politics. However, Eghigian¹⁶ observed that, during the coming period, there is a reality where:

“All of the three great political ideologies of the twentieth century, then, looked to the human sciences in order to make human beings more visible, intelligible, and manageable, albeit in different forms and with different consequences. It is this politicization of human subjectivity that perhaps most distinguishes the contemporary from earlier forms of the self. For in the last century, not just political economies, but personhood itself, became the object of planned reconstruction.”(p. 204)

The statement above refers to a highly significant development of “politicization of psychology”.

In Thomas Kuhn’s “scientific revolution”¹⁷, approaches that historically come later, do not necessarily mean more “scientific” than those that came earlier, rather there is an eternal “revolutionary battle” between various approaches. Like a “pendulum”, psychology is moving once more, even to the most extreme poles of essentialism.

De Vos¹⁸ states, “Contemporary psychology is about genes, neurotransmitters and behavior induced by cognitive or evolutionary patterns; it is psychology without the psyche” (p. 365). This contemporary psychology actually becomes “depsychologization”, because psychology is moving further from subjectivity and social aspect which is the core of the human psyche.

The term “theologization” begins from the assumptions stated by Hardy¹⁵, “Psychology is fundamentally flawed such that it needs to be criticized and corrected by theology because theologians know what is right”, and also “the theology needs to be rescued from psychology” (p. 370). Psychology is strictly considered to be separated from theology because psychology interprets religious experiences as natural processes while theologians explain it as supernatural and transcendent reality.

For some experts, the separation between psychology and theology is reductionist. This is because religious experience can indeed be explained through naturalistic psychology theory, but at the same time, people can also experience authentic and supernatural religious experiences. In fact, psychology can assist theology in observing and explaining personal or communal experiences which mediate God’s love for man¹⁵. In other words, theological interpretation can be sharpened with psychology. On the other hand, psychology can be sharpened with theology as indicated in peace psychology. The relation between religion and peace psychology as described by Jankowski¹² is as following: “Peace psychology appears more concerned about the ways that religious cultural narratives support structural violence. Religion has a constitutive effect on structural violence, which then is constitutive of direct violence and individual experience” (p. 143). Theology in this case gives a reflection regarding nonviolence (reason, dialogue, self-transcendence) and social justice activism (targeted on individual and social change), as well as its relation with “the third party” (God). The paradox stated by Volf, as cited by Jankowski¹², is, “The “theologization” of violence’ encompasses ... the conviction that God is the only one who can legitimately engage in violence” (p. 152). This matter has to be interpreted carefully. The meaning of that sentence is that all hatred, revenge, and will for violence, are in a horizontal relation with fellow human who must first be communicated in a vertical relation between man and God. This process is believed to give birth—as its manifestation—peace-building actions, such as deconstructing destructive religious narratives which reek oppression, marginalization, alienation¹², and the like. Robbins¹⁹ added that to decrease the destructive potential of religion, we must pursue non-dogmatic theology. The way is as following:

“The irony then is that one approaches a non-dogmatic theology, not by rejecting dogmatism or denying belief, not by abstracting from the positive religions that which is most common or most palatable. Instead, a non-dogmatic theology begins to emerge only in the openness to belief, in the wonder and awe-inspiring fear of the mystery of religion, whereby dogma is deconstructed. In that process, the ultimate is still allowed its absolute status through which it impresses its peculiar brand of truth on the believer (for if not, its truth could never be understood), but simultaneously, the ultimate is also made relative by still other theologies: To believe absolutely, and to reflect non-dogmatically.” (p. 195)

3. Research Methods

This study is a qualitative study, using in-depth interview as the main method data collection technique. Interview was conducted to seven people called “resource person”, i.e. Irfan Abubakar (Programme Coordinator for Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies at the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture at Hidayatullah Islamic University, Jakarta); Elizabeth Kristi Poerwandari (Psychologist, Chair of the Graduate Program in Gender Studies, University of Indonesia, Jakarta); Ahmad Suaedy (Executive director of the Wahid Institute); Nani Indra Ratnawati Nurrachman-Sutojo (Social psychologist, Head of Social Psychology Department, Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia, Jakarta); K.H. Husein Muhammad (Commissioner of the Indonesia’s National Commission on Violence against Women, Founder of Fahmina Institute); Nasaruddin Umar (Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs of Indonesia); and Benny Susetyo (Executive Secretary of the Indonesian Bishops’ Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs). The authors consider the fact that Islam and Christianity are the two major religions in Indonesia.

Major questions posed to the resource person were “How do you explain the causes of socio-religious conflicts occurring in Indonesia? Is there a certain perspective of explanation that is more dominant, e.g. psychological

‘against’ theological perspective?” The interview transcript is extracted to produce substantial themes showing tension between “Psychologization” and “theologization” perspective in explaining social conflict and violence.

4. Results and Discussion

Evidently, two main themes were found, namely (1) Theological Interpretation Issues: Primary vs. Secondary Contributors, and (2) Political-economical vs. Psychosociocultural Issues. That is to say, during the interview, a third perspective was found, namely the political-economical issue. The key themes are then fully elaborated based on the verbalization of the resource person. In order to find the gestalt of explanation, the authors try as much as possible to include all of the explanation presented by the resource person. However, there are always a small number of explanations which have no coherence. Therefore, the following part should not be seen as statements agreed by all resource people; but at least as a consensus of the majority of the resource persons. For example, Nasaruddin Umar does not agree if “Government inaction and indecision” exist during periods of social conflicts and violence. If readers of this article want to know exactly regarding “who said what”, they can contact the researchers through the email address listed on the first page of this article.

4.1. Theological Interpretation Issues: Primary vs. Secondary Contributors

There is a view that theological interpretation by a religious group which considers other religious groups as “heretical”, “infidel”, and “misguided” as a natural/normal discourse in the society. These assumptions are an archetype hidden within the individuals’ unconsciousness that they receive through educational pattern received during their early years. According to this view, the term “infidel” must be interpreted as originally shown, namely as an ordinary declaration that different religious groups they meet do not have the same beliefs with them. In the beginning, the term “infidel” (“*kafir*”) is a categorical term which does not provoke people to blaspheme other religious groups; rather it is more of an aspect of personal consciousness which is not charged with ideology of hatred and is much less political. Having positive attitudes toward plurality does not mean that one have to believe that all religions are equally true. The issue occurring at this moment is that the interpretation of the term “infidel” has experienced *pejoration* as if the term “infidel” implies that different groups “can be attacked, threatened, harmed, destroyed, have their rights eliminated, even killed”.

This view expresses that theological interpretation itself existing in the society is not a primary contributor to social conflicts in Indonesia. Should a “more mature” reinterpretation be sought of religious teachings with the potential to cause conflict, then it is an educational matter for the long term. What must be anticipated relating to the interpretation is preventing the *pejoration* mentioned above, which can be used as a “vehicle” by people who cannot control their “desire and lust to take the lead, dominance and power”. Theological interpretation should not become a “hate speech” in front of the public. In addition, theological interpretation, especially those in favor of a particular group, should not become the legal and regulatory basis for the action of state officials. The attitude of the religious council with its doctrinal legitimacy is actually very natural. However, expressions such as, “*The ball is now on National Police’s hands, not MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council). MUI had already issued facts that the movement is false (“sesat”) and misleading,*”²⁰ is actually a signal of pressure for the Government. If those statements become a legal basis, it will have the potential of creating “mainstreaming of intolerance”. The symptom occurs when conflictive violence happens on the local level, where the local police wait for the local religious council stance on the issue. If the local religious council gives a passive or ignorant reaction then the police will conform and adopt the same reaction.

In short, this first view assumes that if religious interpretation and understanding in the dominant factor in social conflict, then conflict and violence should occur everywhere. Evidently it does not. In other words, there is an interaction between religious interpretations with other factors, such as the absence of Government when the conflict occurred. Government’s (un)assertiveness in reducing conflicts and punishing the offenders will become a vicarious learning material for other potential offenders regarding what is permitted and not permitted to be performed.

The second opinion states that religious interpretation affects one’s spirituality. If we do not try to get into the spirituality of an individual or a group then we will fail to fully comprehend the actions of people or groups who are socially conflictive.

Reviewing the actions of people solely through their ideology, without reviewing their spirituality, is insufficient. Ideology is “a set of beliefs, especially the political beliefs on which people, parties, or countries base their actions”²¹; it is different from spirituality which is “the quality of being concerned with deep, often religious, feelings and beliefs, rather than with the physical parts of life.”²² Expressions such as “running the role as the ‘bride of Allah’²³” during conflict show human as creatures of “mythical existence”, not just creatures of “ontological existence” (the terms are borrowed from van Peursen²⁴). According to van Peursen, the attitude of a mythical human is that he felt besieged by supernatural forces, which is considered to be exalted, greater, higher, and ultimate, in this realm. On the other hand, the attitude of an ontological human is creating distance from the encirclement of supernatural forces and theorizing in a scientific-positivistic manner. Psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung²⁵ discussed matters experienced by mythical humans as a mythological experience which is a projection or reflection of the collective unconscious of human culture. The “flying saber” (“*mandau terbang*”) phenomenon²⁶ and expression such as “the sound of weapon is like a song from the heaven” during social conflict are examples of the existence of the theological-mythical side of human with regard to transcendental assumptions concerning things that are considered good or bad which actually contribute to play a role in social conflict.

In this regard, intervention on religious education in public schools and colleges, both state and private, need to display a more “social face” of religion, relational ethics, as well as answering the question of “how we should view a human”, not the sharia and ritualistic dimension (which should be sufficiently taught in the internal group). Despite of this, secularization is also not the answer to the existing issue of socio-religious conflict. The diversity of religious tradition and interpretation is a wealth which contributes to civilization, and it currently appears to be an “oasis” sought by Western people which found the “dryness” of secular life. Reinterpretation that is critical but sincere of religious text is a long-term process. This is because an individual’s religious reasoning has been constructed in such a way, for a long time, and has formed its own ontology and epistemology. For example, in the Holy Book of certain religions there exists “peace verse” and “war verse”. Certain “religious reasoning” has stated that the “war verse” has cancelled out the “peace verse”. Two resource persons have revealed two prominent principals of thought. First is that religion exists not to inspire people to perform acts of anti-humanity. Secondly, it is impossible for contradiction or inconsistency to exist in verses of the Holy Book. Meaning, there is no verse in the Holy Book (e.g., peace verse) which has been canceled by other verse (e.g., war verse). Therefore, scriptural reading of text must be deconstructed whenever possible, as well as emphasizing the “values or principals guaranteed by the Holy Book”. For example, two resource persons revealed that the “war verse” is actually a realistic accommodation of human conditions that are imperfect and have diverse interests and conflict potentials. The dialectical philosophy is that reality has existed prior to the text, and the text is responding to reality, becomes the basis for regulating reality and even shaping reality. Meaning that recitation of the text itself assumes with certainty the dynamics of self and social change. Therefore, conservatism and sanctification of the text is actually difficult to maintain. We also need to critically ask, “This text belongs to whom? Who is authorized for its interpretation?” The principle to be guaranteed in the example of the “war verse” is basic liberties. In this case, the “war verse” may be functional as the “last resource to defend basic liberties” (e.g., when people who are portrayed in the Holy Book were expelled while conducting religious worship).

4.2. Political-Economical vs. Psychosociocultural Issues

The approach of social constructionism states that reality is formed by language. How we express social conflict will determine how we confront and intervene the reality concerning that conflict.

The first opinion emphasizes that social conflict can be dominantly explained through political and economical lens. In this regard, a misunderstood approach of democratization has occurred. Public officials are trapped in impression management so that the substance of the oath of the office (protecting all citizens, law enforcement) is no longer followed. The impression management in questioned is that officials and law enforcers are actually siding and even seem to facilitate unlimited expression of certain parties or groups—which are *as if* “the majority” of the people and appear politically or economically beneficial, even though their action violates the principles of citizenship. Actually, the priority in this matter is the personal security of the public officials, not the security of society.

Democratization after the reformation of Indonesia is hypothesized as the causes of a process that is the opposite of Indonesianization. Previously, during the New Order era, “Indonesianization of religious schools of thought” occurred, and metamorphosis of schools occurred, whether in fashion, thought, or theology. In this case, knowledge about Indonesian local culture becomes very valuable in reviewing the existing schools. However, democracy enables local religious groups to “go back to its origin” and to broadcast the original identity. There occurred the “Iranization of Shia”, “Saudi Arabization of Sunni”, and so on, in Indonesia. In other words, the “embrace of Indonesian identity” of the religious schools is weakening, and the schools experience “centrifugal force” in the context of their Indonesian identity. This matter is also supported by decentralization and regional autonomy. Unfortunately, each group has an interest to develop their school despite having to abjure other schools.

In political term, social conflict is described as a power struggle. Power struggle in Indonesia’s context occurs when “the process of becoming Indonesia” is not completed, where ethnic and religious sentiment is still very strong, and at the same time, injustice can be easily found and easily be carried as a theme of struggle for actors who want to perpetuate their power. Within such context, those in power—if they feel less popular, threatened by the loss of status and privileges, as well as jealousy—can easily mobilize and manipulate religious and social resources to generate communal solidarity by accentuating the exclusivity of certain identity and theology. It is not uncommon for political parties, business people, and local officials to “play along” in “an encounter of interests” with local figures whose power is threatened. This is what is referred to as politicization of identity. In this regard, social conflict can easily erupt in demographically periphery where ethnic and religious sentiment is still strong and the citizens idolize certain figures. In a communal society such as Indonesia, the people tend to be “irrational”. Individual religious observance could vanish, drowned and lost to communal solidarity. In the same vein, those who are not observant in their religious life can also be dragged into communal solidarity. This situation is then utilized by certain groups by using religion as their ideological instrument to “steer” the community. In other words, social conflict is originated from the competition in getting political and economic resources. However, competition which is actually “normal” gets a new dimension, namely religious sentiment. Religion interacts easily with politics because, in Indonesia, religion is a truly fundamental and ultimate awareness for Indonesian people.

“Global political conspiracy” is often attributed as the cause of social conflict. However, “conspiracy theory” should not be used as an explanatory panacea for social conflicts. If there is no strong empirical basis, conspiracy theory should be avoided. There can be two or more phenomena which coexist but essentially have never been associated before. The science of chronology, historiography, and genealogy may be useful in identifying phases in a social conflict. It is necessary to realize that the use of conspiracy theory can become a mean for coping by individuals when feel “trapped” in social conflicts. The condition where someone becomes an actor in a social conflict (especially actors of violence), and also when someone becomes a supporter and a facilitator for others to perform violence in a social conflict, can be “painful” if there is no fundamental explanation. Generally, people do not want to see themselves as incompetent, “doing without a reason”, or “doing for a foolish reason” (self-serving bias phenomenon). Conspiracy theory is used by the people to provide meaning, e.g. “We perform this violence because there are those who conspired to ‘create problem’ for us.” Act of violence in social conflict is seen as if it is coherent with the “theory”. In this last case, we are entering the psychological explanation zone.

The next perspective emphasized that social conflict can be dominantly explained through psychosociocultural view. This opinion states that the limited vocabulary make most social conflicts be described with political language—which is often not sufficient enough. In a socio-psychological way, social conflict can be explained by using cognitive schema, prejudice, social identity, and other theories. On the social level, religion becomes the differentiating identity between groups. Each person wants to know, “Where am I in the social context? Which symbols represent my identity?” In the context of social conflict, when a battle to gain economic and political sources occurs, people will naturally form groups (“I am in which group in this struggle?”). People make religious groups as one of the basis in carrying out the battle.

In addition, the symptom is also supported by “fear of identity loss”. In several cases, geographic migration or displacement of population create significant changes in the composition of a population in terms of majority-minority relationships within an area along with the accompanying cultural symptoms. This social changes, is then formulated with themes of injustice by the elite which then trigger the “fear of identity loss”. This issue also cannot be separated from the constellation and contestation of global culture. For example, there are several cases in several countries, which can be witnessed through mass media, where religious people are afraid in showing or accentuating

their religious identity because of the existence of cultural or political hegemony. This type of historicity can be accessed by collective memory of the public which legitimize the fear of identity loss. This also explains why events in other provinces or even other countries, as long as it pertain religious identity, can evoke communal solidarity. This fear then creates defense mechanism which can be destructive. Why does this fear have such a powerful impact? It is because religious identity is closely related with the narration or story which creates and sharpens the meaning of life and a sense of purpose for people, whether as individual or communal. This narrative identity assists people in dealing with complex problems in life. The loss of economic and political source can still be overcome or restored through negotiation. In the condition of losing such resources, it is obvious that people in villages throughout Indonesia can cope well. They can still maintain their psychological wellbeing, as long as they can stay together; perform rituals together with those having the same religious identity. However, religious identity has a strong emotional content. Losing religious identity is viewed as terrifying because it disconnects people from the meaning of life. Therefore, if “sacred religious language” is put forward (e.g., “Glorious life or die a martyr”; “*Hidup Mulia atau Mati Syahid*”), then it will make people do anything.

Unfortunately, when the destructive defense mechanism materialized in social conflicts, the combatants on the front line want to perpetuate the role. The combatants are usually publically a “nobody” prior to the social conflict. In the social conflict, they have a new stage to exist, to perform heroic acts in the context of defending the identity of their community. They are aware that if peace occurs, they can no longer perform; because in peace situation, those who are in the front line are the intellectual elite and the political elite. This psychological condition can complicate the constellation of a social conflict.

Based on the explanation above, fear of identity loss can occur without being preceded by real causes (competition, etc.). This fear can be a form of imagination on the base of psycho-historical conditions such as, Indonesian Moslems confronting “Islam-phobia”, “marginalization of the political role of Islam” during the New Order period. Although Moslems aspirations can be freely channeled by the current democratization, “feelings of marginalization” cannot instantly disappear. When “small groups” with different belief emerge, appear, and exist, the majority conducted a “projection” as if venting the psychic tension acquired during the New Order period. “Global conspiracy” theory can be more easily accepted as if there is a global engineering to destroy the majority (e.g., Ahmadiyya as a British instrument to destroy Islam). The majority argued that the offensive action is for the defense of their identity. Projection also appears in demand to realize religious identity in the form of regulation and policy.

In the psycho-cultural language, “politicization of conflict” can also be explained as a battle between system of meaning of the local community and system of meaning of modern society—with political concepts developed by Western society which is then passed on to us. For example, in Indonesia, traditionally the head of the village act as a moderator in a village meeting. The status of the head of the village (“*kades*”) is not only related with power (as understood by modern political concept), but also has the connotation as a role model which process and manage a variety of public opinion to solve a problem. Indonesian society, according to one of the resource person, is still strong in embracing local knowledge about how society works. Unfortunately, the Government does not use a psychosociocultural approach in implementing economic-oriented developmental pattern. What is known by the people is not appreciated. Consequently, many policies create ecological shocks because it destabilizes the long-lived pattern of life. In this regard, the cultural language of “Developing Indonesian People Intactly and Entirely” (“*Membangun Manusia Indonesia Seutuhnya dan Seluruhnya*”) which was a popular development slogan during the New Order era, according to one of the resource persons, is actually a pivotal thing, because the criteria for successful development is human; *human* is the subject as well as the object of development.

Social conflict which appears as a religious conflict, according to psycho-cultural approach, is believed to be caused not by blaming or denigrating theology between different faiths. What actually happens is that in the rapid social changes caused by the development, not all people can adjust at the same speed and fitness. Condition or situation of “disorientation” (borrowing the terminology of Erich Fromm²⁷, a social psychoanalyst) can easily occur. Because of the political-ideological-social orientation that exist does not satisfy in supporting or assisting individuals and/or groups to go through rapid social changes, it is very logical if religion (as an ideology) becomes something that is relied on. Consequently, verses of the Holy Book and religious teachings become an instrument to justify all actions of a group which experience disorientation and mal-adaptation. The problem then becomes increasingly complex when other teachings of other groups that are contradictory appears and disturbed the first

group; especially when there are masses being contested by both groups. In relation to this, comprehension (through discourse phenomenology), advocacy and empowerment of the community to bring a group from the old situation “X” to the new situation “Y”, become indispensable. Social psychology becomes a bridge between the society (the subject and object of development) and development policy maker so that community groups do not lose orientation, and experience the smallest disruption.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that psychological and theological perspective are competing to provide an adequate explanation regarding social conflicts in Indonesia. However, if we are not vigilant, the explanation can easily be trapped in “Psychologization of religion” and “theologization of psychology”. In other words, both of these matters must be viewed as excessive impact of effort to provide the best scientific contribution. The symptoms of “Psychologization” or “theologization” are visible from the verbalization of the resource people with sentence patterns as follows, *“Actually syndrome X is a natural or normal phenomenon. If syndrome X is believed to be a primary contributor, then social conflicts and violence ought to happen everywhere. However, it seems that other symptoms must also be watched, and they might be the main causes, namely syndrome Y.”* In this case, *Y* is a perspective of the subject of “-ization” (superordinate); whereas *X* is the perspective of the object of it (subordinate).

This study also concludes that language is not the only way for us to represent or reflect something, but also as social practice and action^{28,29}. Language has an implication on our social existence. Likewise, our way of discussing a social conflict determines the extent to which the boundaries of intervention we can perform. When we encounter the boundaries of our perspective as well as boundaries of intervention we can perform, then we need to see the possibility whether we can break those boundaries or not. This is what we called as interdisciplinary approaches to intractable social conflicts. We need to add new vocabularies that are mutually agreed in the context of interdisciplinary approaches, and this requires academic modesty from proponents of each scientific discipline. The rampant use of online social network media, such as Facebook, Twitter—which are producing and reproducing words (language)—must be viewed as a golden opportunity to continuously popularize the development of and participation in the interdisciplinary approach, whether through verbal texts, audible sounds, or visual images.

Barrett³⁰ through systematic study, found that dynamical system theory which was used by Vallacher et al.^{2,3} explains that intractable conflicts is actually not an entirely new theory, rather substantially many of the components of that theory are already presented by Carl Gustav Jung. He found similarities between the “attractor” concept with Jung’s “archetype” and the “latent attractors” concept with Jung’s “shadow”. Some aspects of this current study are also probably not something that is truly novel. However, what we should not forget is that the theory by Vallacher et al. has its own constellation or gestalt. This is the novelty of their theory. Likewise, the results of this study are expected to contribute new nuances with a way of presenting both perspectives; psychology and theology, as well as the danger of “Psychologization” and “theologization”.

Theoretically, we still require theory building activities, not only simply applying existing theories to social conflicts in Indonesia that are very casuistic and contextual on each conflict area. Participatory research method³¹ is highly recommended in building framework relating to conflict resolution and social violence. Nonetheless, the resource people remind that discovery of the “best theory” will not necessarily resolve the destructive social conflict. *“Touching the heart”* is one of the phrases that are often used by the resource persons as one of the best practice in the resolution efforts in the field every day. For example, one of the resource people which participate in studying the leadership of JokoWidodo (Jokowi), the current Governor of DKI Jakarta, states that Jokowi shows genuine effort in preventing social conflict by visiting and greeting one by one group with the potential for assault without exaggeration by the mass media. Other resource person stated that “argumentative victory” is not always successful in creating peace. We are often trapped in expression of “theoretical supremacy”; but we all know that not everyone has theoretical expertise. However, if we can balance our message regarding peace, pluralism, and so on, based on the “theoretical models” that we found, in ways that are sensitive and emphatic, then the approach that we do will be more effective in transforming people from “militant in the use of physical resources (strength, weapon)” into “militant in the use of affection (love)”. Other resource person emphasizes other affective terms, namely the need for an “art” in approaching issues of conflict and social violence. Like peeling an onion, the layers of onion are issues visible in our eyes from “distant observation” through the mass media. Those layers almost are not always the

heart of the problem. At a point where we have not found “the heart of the problem”, theorizing can be a reckless activity. We may need to go directly to the sites of the conflict and sharpen our craft and intuition there, associate with the conflicting groups and “third parties” that “play” there. Practical implication of the explanations mentioned in the previous Results and Discussion section should also be followed up by real action.

Acknowledgment

This research is funded by Bina Nusantara University (Contract Letter No. 005A/Dir.RIC/IV/2013) and will be submitted to the Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Decentralization Research Grant Scheme) for further research.

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